

GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

EDUC 800 003
Ways of Knowing (3 credits)
Fall, 2014
Thursdays, 1:30-4:10, Thompson 2022

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Course Description (from course catalog): Provides understanding of characteristic ways of knowing in various liberal arts disciplines while examining subject matter, scope, key concepts, principles, methods, and theories. Analyzes philosophical traditions underlying educational practice and research.

Course Objectives:

1. Understand a number of different ways of knowing that are important for education and educational research, and how these ways of knowing have influenced individual scholars, research, and practice in education and related fields.
2. Be able to analyze and explain some important personal, sociocultural, professional, political, and other influences on ways of knowing.
3. Be able to use different ways of knowing to enhance your own research and practice.
4. Expand and refine your scholarly abilities, including critical and analytic reading, writing, thinking, oral communication, and the use of scholarly resources.

Required Course Texts:

Bruner, Jerome. (1996). *The culture of education*. Harvard University Press.
Descartes, Rene. (1637). *Discourse on method and related writings*. Penguin Classics.
Kuhn, Thomas. (1976). *The structure of scientific revolutions*. University of Chicago Press.
Strogatz, Steven. (2004). *Sync: How order emerges from chaos in the universe, nature, and daily life*. New York: Hyperion.

All assigned readings not in the above texts will be either on the course Blackboard site (access this through

https://mymasonportal.gmu.edu/webapps/portal/execute/tabs/tabAction?tab_group_id=66_1)

or on the internet (the URL will be provided).

Recommended Text:

American Psychological Association. (2009). *Publication Manual* (6th ed.). Author: Washington, DC. (Recommended for entire doctoral program). See also Maxwell, J., Guide to the APA Publication Manual, 6th edition (Blackboard).

Supplies needed:

Computer with Internet access and current GMU email account.

GMU Policies and Resources for Students

- **Honor Code:** Students must adhere to the guidelines of the George Mason University Honor Code [See <http://oai.gmu.edu/the-mason-honor-code/>].
- **Computer Use:** Students must follow the university policy for Responsible Use of Computing [See <http://universitypolicy.gmu.edu/policies/responsible-use-of-computing/>].
- **Email:** Students are responsible for the content of university communications sent to their George Mason University email account and are required to activate their account and check it regularly. All communication from the university, college, school, and program will be sent to students solely through their Mason email account (**masonlive.gmu.edu**).
- **Counseling Services:** The George Mason University Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) staff consists of professional counseling and clinical psychologists, social workers, and counselors who offer a wide range of services (e.g., individual and group counseling, workshops and outreach programs) to enhance students' personal experience and academic performance [See <http://caps.gmu.edu/>].
- **Exceptional Needs:** Students with disabilities who seek accommodations in a course must be registered with the George Mason University Office of Disability Services (ODS) and inform their instructor, in writing, at the beginning of the semester [See <http://ods.gmu.edu/>].
- **Distractions:** Students must follow the university policy stating that all sound emitting devices shall be turned off during class unless otherwise authorized by the instructor.
- **Writing Support:** The George Mason University Writing Center staff provides a variety of resources and services (e.g., tutoring, workshops, writing guides, handbooks) intended to support students as they work to construct and share knowledge through writing [See <http://writingcenter.gmu.edu/>].
- **Professional Dispositions:** Students are expected to exhibit professional behaviors and dispositions at all times.
- **Core Values Commitment:** The College of Education & Human Development is committed to collaboration, ethical leadership, innovation, research-based practice, and social justice. Students are expected to adhere to these principles.
<http://cehd.gmu.edu/values/>

For additional information on the College of Education and Human Development, Graduate School of Education, please visit our website [See <http://gse.gmu.edu/>]

CEHD Student Expectations

- **Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory, as the discussions that take place in this class are essential to achieving the course objectives.
- **Tardiness:** Prompt arrival for the beginning of class is expected.
- **Absence:** If you must miss a class, you are responsible for notifying me (preferably in advance) and for completing any assignments, readings, etc. before the start of the next class.
- **Participation:** Each student is expected to complete all the assigned readings and participate in the discussions. It is expected that each student will be attuned to group dynamics in order to ensure the active participation of all in the class.
- **Assignments:** All assignments must be completed in MSWord and sent to me as an attachment via email prior to class. Late assignments will not be accepted without making prior arrangements with me.

Assignments

Weekly reflections (8 x 5 = 40%)

You are expected to prepare 8 reflection papers as noted in the tentative class schedule, turned in electronically by the beginning of the class on the date we will discuss the topic. The intent of these brief papers (2 pages, double-spaced) is to help you become thoughtful and analytic about some rather conceptual, and sometimes complex, course content. You should look upon these papers as an opportunity to engage me in a discussion with you as you grow over the semester.

Paper on a New Way of Knowing (for you) (40%)

Select a new way of knowing for you, e.g. a new theory in your field, an area within the arts, sciences, or social sciences, or an interdisciplinary area of inquiry. Explore this new way of knowing. Prepare a paper (about 2500 words/10 pages) that demonstrates: 1) your understanding of the basic assumptions of this approach, and 2) what it is that makes this approach a new way of knowing for you. Note: depth and analysis are more important than breadth. APA format required. **Paper is due Nov 20.**

As part of the development of your paper, please submit via email, a one-page description of your proposed project so we can agree early in the semester no later than **October 16**. The outline should address the following questions:

1. What is the way of knowing you will explore?
2. How do you propose to study it?
3. What are your tentative sources?

If appropriate, I will share your thoughts with others who have identified a similar area to explore.

Evaluation of the paper: The main criteria are a clearly defined focus, clear and accurate presentation of its assumptions and definitions about knowing, a demonstrated understanding of the implications for research, and clear organization and writing.

Reflective Analysis on Ways of Knowing (20%)

You are expected to keep a weekly journal (above) that is both reflective and analytic during the course. The overall purpose is to use informal journal writing as a means to think and reflect on the content of the course. In particular, the journal is a means for you to connect course material to your own experiences and to analyze the course readings critically. The course outline below lists specific assignments for the journal. For this final paper, you will look across the semester and consider its effects on you. The guiding questions for this final paper are:

1. How would you have described your way(s) of knowing, learning, and thinking when you began this class?
2. As you consider your autobiography/personal history, what factors personal, experiential, familial, sociocultural, historical, and/or disciplinary influenced your ways of knowing?
3. How has the course affected your ways of knowing as a practitioner and as a researcher?
4. How would you describe your current way of knowing?
5. What are the implications of your reflections (on questions 3 and 4 above) for your personal and professional growth during your doctoral study?

Criteria for assessment include: evidence of serious reflection and analysis, clear organization and clear writing. This paper is the culminating activity of the course and is due at the beginning of the last class meeting (4/29). **Since this is a reflection paper, APA format is not required.**

All assignments must be completed in MSWord using 12 pt. font and sent to me as an attachment via regular email prior to class. Late assignments will not be accepted without making prior arrangements with me.

Course Structure

Class meetings will be run as seminars. I expect you to come to class prepared to discuss the reading assignments, and encourage you to share with the class other readings that you have found that are relevant. I will email in advance my notes and discussion questions for each week's readings. I will also give mini-lectures on topics that I think are not well addressed by available readings, and there will be in-class exercises dealing with certain skills.

Before beginning the readings for a particular week I suggest that you ask yourself what *your* questions and concerns are about the topics for that week, and that you list these. After finishing a reading, jot down the author's main points. Then, ask yourself how these relate to your questions or concerns. Did the reading answer your questions? Did it give you new ideas or ways of thinking? How can you use what you learned from reading it?

Many of the readings present different perspectives on the same issue. Think about each author's "way of knowing" as you read his/her work, and how this fits into the different approaches we have discussed.

Tentative Class Schedule

August

28 Introduction to the Course

Elbow, *The Believing Game and How to Make Conflicting Opinions More Fruitful*

September

4 Shared Experience: film, "Man from Earth"

Journal entry 1 (due next week): Prepare a two-page, double-spaced essay answering the following questions: 1) what do you think the film was about?; 2) what ways of knowing did you notice? 3) what was your reaction to the film?

11 The Cartesian ethos: How we've come to define "knowing"

Wrap-up discussion of the film "Man from Earth"
Descartes, *Discourse on Method and Related Writings*
The Enabling Virtue (on blackboard **weblinks**)
What is evidence? (on blackboard course content)

Journal entry 2 (due next week): What is an example of rationalism, empiricism, positivism/logical positivism, and post-positivism in your job, discipline, and/or life?

18 Ways of knowing about teaching

Shared Experience: A Case of the Study of Teaching
Viewing questions: How did Secretary Bennett teach the class? What did you find yourself watching, looking for, and looking at as you watched the video?

Journal entry 3 (due next week): Draw a pictorial representation of the relationships among the various authors' approaches to analyzing Bennett's teaching, and bring a copy of your representation as a powerpoint, overhead, etc. Place the approach you find most consistent with your way of knowing at the center of the pictorial representation so we can see how you view yourself.

25 Paradigms and Ways of Knowing in Science

Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, pp. 1-110

Journal entry 4 (due next week): What, for Kuhn, is a paradigm? What role does it play in scientific revolutions? Imagine a conversation between Kuhn and Descartes: what would Kuhn say to Descartes about his *Discourse*?

2 How ways of knowing change

Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, pp. 111-210

Journal entry 5 (due next week): How does the second half of Kuhn’s perspective appeal to you? Why? What is it specifically about his perspective that helps you understand how we come to know? Did you find any weaknesses in his argument, i.e., things you just could not accept? What were they and why?

October

9 Scientific Inquiry in Education

National Research Council, *Scientific research in education*, pp. 1-126. Read online at <http://books.nap.edu/catalog/10236.html>

Maxwell, Causal investigation, qualitative research, and scientific inquiry in education. *Educational Researcher* 33(3), 2004. (Blackboard)

Journal entry 6 (due next week): How does the way of knowing presented as “scientific” by the NRC compare with those discussed previously? What strengths and limitations do you see this as having? Where do you see yourself in relation to “science” in education?

16 The Culture of Education

Bruner, *The Culture of Education*, pp. 1-99

Measurement and its Discontents (on blackboard *course content*)

<http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2010/11/30/anthroscience>

Journal entry 7 (due next week): Compare the first half of Bruner with Cartesian philosophy. How does Bruner argue that we come to know? What does he mean by the culture of education? What is the influence of culture on how we come to know?

23 The Culture of Education and Knowing

Bruner, *The Culture of Education*, pp. 100-185

Maxwell, Meaning and culture are real (Blackboard)

Journal entry 8 (due next week): What is the essence of Bruner’s argument about culture? How does it fit into your own way of knowing? What are the implications of Maxwell's definition of culture for Bruner's argument?

30 Narrative Inquiry

Connelly, M. F. & Clandinin D. J. (1990). Stories of experience and narrative inquiry. *Educational Researcher*, 19(5), 2-14. (Blackboard)

Coulter, C. A., & Smith, M. L. (2009). The construction zone: literacy elements in narrative research. *Educational Researcher*, 38(8), 577-590. (Blackboard)

Barone, T. (2009). Comments on Coulter and Smith: Narrative researchers as witnesses of injustice and ages of social change. *Educational Researcher*, 38(8), 591-597. (Blackboard)

Clandinin, D. J., & Murphy, M. S. (2009). Comments on Coulter and Smith: Relational ontological commitments in narrative research. *Educational Researcher*, 38(8), 598-602. (Blackboard)

Journal entry 8 (due next week): What arguments about ways of knowing and paradigm shifts are evident in these readings? How do they fit with Descartes, Kuhn, and Bruner?

"New way of knowing" paper topic due

November

6 Chaos/Complexity: The New Revolution?

Strogatz, *Sync*, pp. 1-100

13 Chaos, Complexity, and Understanding the Human Professions

Strogatz, *Sync*, pp. 103-176

20 What Do We Know?

Strogatz, pp. 179-289

"New Way of Knowing" paper due

27 Thanksgiving--no class

December

4 Final class

Reflective Analysis paper due